

Harpswell Community Garden Report January 30, 2015

SUMMARY OF 2014 GARDEN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:

Infrastructure

The infrastructure projects completed in 2012 and 2013 continued to provide useful support to gardeners and visitors this season. In 2014 a third section was added to our composting system and a 10 x10 foot sand box was constructed in the children's play area. A removable wooden sign reading "Garden Plots Available" was added to the larger Mitchell Field entrance sign, where it remained until all 25 plots were assigned to plot holders. The work for all of these projects was accomplished by volunteers.

Outreach

Kara Douglas was appointed by HHLT as our Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, and worked for the garden on a part time basis between April and October. With her assistance we organized and held several events at the garden this season, including an apple tree grafting workshop and a garden tour/beekeeping presentation. Committee member Judith Stanton submitted monthly articles to the Harpswell Anchor updating the community about HCG activities and other garden-related issues of significance. Relationships with the Harpswell Coastal Academy, Apogee Camp, Bowdoin College Common Good Day volunteers and other community groups and individuals continued this season. Kara primarily maintained communication with groups and individuals while Committee Chair Jane Covey was present to meet with helpers in person and oversee their work at the garden.



Apogee Campers

With continued assistance from Julia McLeod at the

Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, Kara distributed a regular email newsletter. She also updated the Community Garden page on the Town Website. Her email newsletter went to all volunteers and gardeners to update them on activities, provide gardening information, list local events and recruit volunteers for work days. Kara has continued to track volunteer and in-kind contributions and to share information electronically.

In addition lush vegetation and an incredible crop of sunflowers scattered throughout the garden drew the attention of many visitors to Mitchell Field.

Gardens/Gardeners

Fifteen gardeners rented 25 plots this year, filling all the available spaces. In comparison, during the 2013 season, 17 gardeners utilized 19 plots.



One Gardener's Plot

Harpswell Coastal Academy occupied four plots for use with their summer program, and a local 4H group utilized two. HCA had some challenges maintaining their plots, hence one was donated to gardener Mary Ruchinskas, who grew vegetables for the MidCoast Hunger Prevention Program. Though growing for MCHPP was not part of our plan for this season, Mary and other gardeners donated 402 lbs. of produce to the food pantry.

We organized a fall harvest potluck dinner for gardeners and volunteers, but unfortunately the event was poorly attended due to rain.

Soil and Water Issues

In fall 2013, volunteers removed topsoil from a fallow area of the garden and added it, along with compost, to 25 remaining plots in an effort to build up soil depth and improve drainage. The project proved to

be a resounding success. Drainage in the growing areas was dramatically improved and growth yields were higher, leading to overall gardener satisfaction.

We continue to face some drainage challenges in the orchard. While this doesn't seem to adversely effect the apple trees, it can make mowing and maintenance difficult. Going forward, we'll continue to monitor the drainage issues and determine whether installing underground drainage or deepening the swale drainage would be of help.

Orchard

Robert McIntyre continues to maintain eight heritage apple trees, many of which bloomed in 2014, though no apples have set to date. Robert was instrumental in conducting the apple tree grafting workshop in April, from which at least four local grafts were successful. The HCG committee decided to hold off on planting additional trees this season until we can best determine where to place the trees to allow for adequate sunlight in the garden area. Robert will continue to monitor the existing trees annually for winter moth damage.

Community Support

The garden continues to benefit from cash and in-kind material and service contributions from individuals and businesses in the local community. Please see a partial list of these volunteers and supporters at the end of this report.

2014 GOALS

Soil

Test the efficacy of raised beds for solving soil/water issues and improve soil quality through amendment and green manures.

As reported above, raising and amending the soil in each plot was a successful strategy for managing drainage issues and enhancing fertility. While we had planned to take a year off from growing produce for the Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program, we found that yields were high enough to donate 402 lbs of garden produce this season. The vast majority of this was grown, harvested and delivered by plot holder and volunteer Mary Ruchinskaskas, who eagerly turned unused areas of the garden into highly productive growing areas. Her enthusiasm and contributions have been an inspiration to many!

Develop and implement a multi-year plan to improve soil quality.

Adding compost to the soil has contributed significantly to the quality and productivity of garden

plots. In order to produce compost on-site one of our volunteers has begun to build a large compost pile and invited local horse owners to contribute manure. We have also agreed with a local landscaping company to deposit clean yard waste at the site. However, that did not happen this season. In the coming years we will work further to develop and maintain this compost area.

Gardeners

Enhance the experience of garden plot holders and volunteers.

Improving the drainage issues has gone a long way to enhancing everyone's experiences at the garden. In addition to achieving better growth yields, we worked to maintain a weed-free work area by continuing to mulch garden paths and keeping the garden space visually attractive for both plot holders and visitors to Mitchell Field.

A survey was conducted early in the season to determine what kinds of workshops and community events were of interest to gardeners. Both the apple tree grafting workshop and the garden tour/beekeeping presentation drew participation from plot holders and interested members of the Harpswell community.



Beekeeping Workshop

Welcome returning gardeners and recruit new gardeners to maintain the total number of at least 17.

Thirteen individual/family gardeners and two youth groups utilized all of the available 25 plots this season.

Support gardeners' interests through a variety of educational and community building activities.

We organized the following: New gardener orientation, Apple tree grafting workshop, Spring clean-up, Garden tour/beekeeping presentation, End of season potluck, Fall Clean-up.

Volunteers

Build the number of active volunteers by 25% to at least 50 individuals.

This season we utilized the skills of 25 individuals. In addition, we held two work days with organizational partners. Apogee Camp sent 14 students and Bowdoin College sent 8 for a grand total of 49 volunteers or 98% of our goal.

Maintain and strengthen relationships with current collaborating organizations, and add at least one new institutional relationship.

We continued collaborations with Bowdoin College, Apogee Camp and Harpswell Coastal Academy and began a relationship with the Harpswell 4 H group. Efforts to engage students from Mt. Ararat High School proved unsuccessful as our work schedule coincided with end of year school activities, most seriously with the Prom.

Increase the total volunteer hours by 15% to 400.

Recorded individual volunteer hours for the year equals 184.75. Organizations donated a combined 59 hours. The two together equals 244 hours or 61% of the 400 hour goal. In hindsight, it seems this goal may have been overly ambitious. Earlier years involved significant infrastructure activities (e.g., path, garden bed and fence construction) while 2014 involved less intensive operational maintenance. Additionally, we know that volunteer hours were under-reported in the log in the garden shed. Accuracy of reporting may be a goal for next season.

Strengthen our volunteer recognition/appreciation program.

Our program consists of written thank you notes to the organizations who support workdays along with photos of their volunteers. Individuals are recognized through personal communication and in this report. The exceptional contributions of one volunteer were also recognized with a Skillins gift certificate this year.

Outreach and Community Engagement

Maintain ongoing communication through articles in local papers, town website, revised brochure, posters and group meetings.

We did this through the following:

- Monthly articles and/or photos in Harpswell Anchor
- Press Releases submitted to The Forecaster and Times Record
- Town website updates with composting resources and beekeeping course opportunities
- Posters printed and hung for garden

tour/beekeeping demo

- New brochure is in process

Continue to solicit input and feedback, expertise and gifts in kind from individuals, experts, local businesses and community organizations.

We used informal solicitation from individuals and community groups as needs and opportunities arose. Please see list of supporters at the end of this report.

Raise the profile of the Community Garden as a community resource.

While more work can always be done in this regard, we took steps this year by making monthly contributions to the Harpswell Anchor, holding community events at the garden, improving signage at the entrance to Mitchell Field and continuing to maintain partnerships with organizations such as MidCoast Hunger Prevention Program, Bowdoin College, Apogee Camp and Harpswell Coastal Academy. Volunteers and committee members from HCG also assisted with the construction of raised garden beds at Harpswell Community School. While it's unlikely that the school would be directly involved in the garden at Mitchell Field, this continues to establish the community garden as a local resource. Volunteers Teeter Bibber and Peri Lanue also provided a page of composting resources which was added to the town website.

PLANS FOR THE 2015 GARDEN SEASON

Goals for 2015

Initiate "Gardening for the Common Good" project with Harpswell Coastal Academy.

We will seek outside grant funding to recruit and mentor two HCA students to work with our expert and Master Gardeners to plant, maintain and harvest a 40x50 foot garden area. HCA will organize learning goals/program for the students while community gardeners will provide on-site supervision and mentoring. Students will receive a modest stipend.

Improve soil quality in common garden area:

We will add soil/compost to raise the garden area and improve fertility, and add nutrients recommended by state soil test.

Workshops/Community Outreach:

We will continue to offer workshops to the gardeners and community at large. Among them will be collaboration with the town Conservation Commission to offer one or two workshops in its

education program, "Think First, Spray Last", an integrated pest management (IPM) approach to gardening and landscaping.

Water Management:

If we can secure volunteer services, we will build a drainage system to facilitate gardening on the 50x100 foot area now laying fallow. The drains will extend into the orchard to drain that area as well. Should this not be feasible, we are considering alternatives such as Hugglekulture (raised soil areas with brush/wood understory) and/or cover crops that would improve aeration and add organic matter.

We would like to drain both the fallow garden area and the orchard in order to improve growing conditions. To do so we need an outside grant and dedicated volunteer labor. Our best grant opportunity makes awards in November, so implementation of this project would likely carry over into the next year. We indicate materials cost in the proposed budget for planning purposes.

Enhance gardening experience:

We will build a community herb garden for shared use by gardeners and initiate other ways to build a sense of community among them.

2014 Financial Report and Proposed 2015 Budget:
(Please see the attached page).

We expended just under \$600 of the 2014 budget of \$1655. Deferring maintenance of mowers, the lawn area leveling project, donated compost, and delayed brochure production account for most of the under spending. Note that our Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator is directly funded by the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

In 2015 we plan to initiate a youth involvement project, "Gardening for the Common Good" funded primarily through outside grants. The total budget is projected to be \$3250 including \$1150 for regular operating costs and \$2100 for the 'Gardening for the Common Good' project. We also show \$6000 for materials for the drainage infrastructure project, but expect those funds at the end of the calendar year.

Respectfully Submitted: Jane Covey on Behalf of the Community Garden Committee – Cyndy Bush, David Chipman, Peg Newberg, Mary Ann Roark, Mary Ruchinkas, Judith Stanton, and Kara Douglas, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator.

The Harpswell Community Garden appreciates the contributions of the following people and organizations during the 2014 Season

**A PARTIAL LISTING OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED AT THE HARPSWELL
COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Apogee Camp
Teeter Bibber
Bowdoin Students
Dave Brown
Cyndy Bush
Dave Chipman
Jane Covey
Kara Douglas
Kathie Gardiner
Harpswell Coastal Academy
Nadia and Ed Harris
Peri Lanue
Robert McIntyre
Julia McLeod
The Montana Family
Peg and Don Newberg
Michelle Rines
Mary Ann and Rob Roark
Faye Sheren
Judith Stanton and family
Hank Swartz
Paul Weeden and family

**PARTIAL LISTING OF BUSINESSES AND
INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE DONATED
MATERIALS, SERVICES and FUNDS**

Agren Appliance
Brooks Farm and Feed
David Chipman
Bill Ewing
Harpswell Garden Club
Robert McIntyre
Skillins Nursery
Lowe's
University of Maine Cooperative Extension,
Androscoggin and Sagadahoc Counties
Vail Tree Service
Beekeepers:
Jennifer Nadeau
Georgiana Rock
Holly Spicer
Judith Stanton

2014 Financial Report

| | 2014 Budget | 2014 Actual | Balance Cash Basis | 2014 In-Kind | 2014 Total Cash & In- Kind |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Funds Available: | | | | | |
| HHLT 2014 Award | 1055 | 551 | 504 | | 551 |
| 2015 Grant Awards | | | | | |
| Rental Income | 500 | 490 | 10 | | 490 |
| Cash Contributions | 100 | 100 | 0 | | 100 |
| Total Funds Available | 1655 | 1141 | 514 | | 1141 |
| Expenses: | | | | | |
| Student Internships (2) | | | | | |
| Tools/Equipment | | | | | |
| Riding/Hand Mower | 300 | | 300 | 20 | 20 |
| Bilge Pump/Hose | 0 | 40 | -40 | | 40 |
| Play Area | | 186 | 9 | | 186 |
| Lumber | 55 | | | | 0 |
| Landscape Fabric | 20 | | | | 0 |
| Sand | 120 | | | | 0 |
| Loam | 60 | | 60 | | 0 |
| Grass Seed | 30 | | 30 | | 0 |
| Grading | | | 0 | | 0 |
| Garden Preparation/ Maintenance | | | | | |
| Peat Moss | 120 | | 120 | | 0 |
| Compost + Delivery | 390 | 255 | 135 | 60 | 315 |
| Soil Amendments/fertilizer | 40 | 27 | 13 | | 27 |
| Other | | | | | 0 |
| Plant Material/seeds | 25 | | 25 | 50 | 50 |
| Soil Test | 30 | | 30 | | 0 |
| Mulch/Garden Stakes | 50 | | 50 | | 0 |
| Fuel for Mowers | 70 | 44 | 26 | | 44 |
| Apple Trees | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| Outreach/Education Materials | 345 | 0 | 345 | | 0 |
| Volunteer Support and Recognition | 0 | 25 | -25 | | 25 |
| Total Town Administered Funds: | 1655 | 577 | 1103 | 130 | |
| Total Cash and In- kind | | | | | 681.61 |
| Reserve Funds: | | | | | |
| Net Rental Income/Donations | 740 | | | | |
| 2014 Income/Donations | | 565 | | | |
| 2012-2014 Total Reserve Funds | | | 1305 | | |